

## AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL ON EXPOSITORY TEXTS AT SEMESTER IV OF BATANGHARI UNIVERSITY (UNBARI) JAMBI

Khidayatul Munawwaroh<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

Penelitian ini memiliki tujuan untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa semester empat Universitas Batanghari (UNBARI) Jambi dalam menulis teks ekspositori fokus pada organisasi, tata bahasa, dan mekanik dan untuk mengetahui kesulitan yang dihadapi mahasiswa dalam menulis teks ekspositori. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini yaitu mahasiswa semester empat Universitas Batanghari (UNBARI) Jambi. Sampel data ini diambil secara acak dan 25 % dari jumlah siswa semester IV. Di samping itu, peneliti menggunakan tes menulis dan interview sebagai instrumen dalam penelitian ini. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis dengan menggunakan kriteria penilaian yang diambil dari para ahli dan dinilai oleh peneliti sendiri. Berdasarkan analisis tes ditemukan bahwa mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris semester empat Universitas Batanghari Jambi mempunyai kemampuan yang rendah dalam menulis teks ekspositori berhubungan dengan isi, organisasi, tata bahasa, dan mekanik. Berdasarkan rata-rata nilai dari tes, tidak ada yang memperoleh nilai sangat bagus. Ada 3 orang mahasiswa (10%) yang memperoleh nilai bagus. Ada 13 orang mahasiswa (43,33 %) yang memperoleh nilai rendah. Ada 14 orang mahasiswa (46,66 %) yang memperoleh nilai sangat rendah. Selanjutnya, berdasarkan hasil wawancara, kebanyakan dari mahasiswa mengalami kesulitan dalam isi, organisasi, tata bahasa, dan mekanik. Tetapi kesulitan yang utama adalah dari segi mekanik.

*Kata kunci: Analisis, Kemampuan Menulis, Teks Ekspositori.*

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching English in Indonesia is focused on the student's communicative competence. The communication can be in oral and written forms. The learners should be capable of using the four language skills, namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The learners should have abilities in reading and listening to support their speaking and writing.

As one of the four language skills, writing has always occupied place in most English language course. One of the reasons is that more and more people need to learn to write in English for occupational or academic purposes. Students at university, especially, need to learn writing and prepare themselves for the final academic assignment, thesis writing. This, in terms of student's needs, integrated writing is necessary.

Writing skill is considered as a crucial need for people, especially for those who are involved in the world of business, politics, and education. In the world of business, people can maintain their business relationship and develop their business network through writing because a business man needs to be able to write business letters and to promote their business by using written language. Then, in the world of politics, politicians need to be able to write a good statement such as laws. Moreover, in the world of education, writing skill is very important to be possessed by all people involved. Therefore, those who can write well will be able to build good relationship with others and pursue their goals.

Dealing with the importance of writing skill in the world of education, university students of English department as one of its elements are supposed to be good in writing due to one of the

language skills. They are expected to be able to write many kinds of writing. One of them is essay writing. Based on the researcher's pre observation and interview with the writing lecturer of Batanghari University (UNBARI) Jambi, there were some problems found in teaching learning process of writing expository text at UNBARI. The problems are identified as follow: first, the students have difficulties in grammatical sentences. Second, some students find difficulties in choosing the words. Third, some of them still find difficulties in capitalization and punctuation. Fourth, Most of the students did not like writing and were lazy to write. Fifth, most of the students failed to develop their ideas in a good order, and the last, they have difficulties to make their essay become coherence and unity.

The researcher formulated the problem into the following question: "How is the students' writing skill of expository text concerning with content, organization, grammar, and mechanic at semester four of Batanghari University (UNBARI) Jambi? And "What the difficulties are faced by the students of Batanghari University (UNBARI) Jambi in writing expository text concerning with content, organization, grammar, and mechanic?"

The purposes of the research were: 1. To explain the students' writing skill in expository text concerning with content, organization, grammar, and mechanic at semester four of Batanghari University (UNBARI) Jambi. 2. To explain what difficulties are faced by the students in writing expository text concerning with content, organization, grammar, and mechanic

The results of this research are expected to be beneficial for theoretical, practical, and operational significances. Theoretically, the research findings will add the database of teaching writing skill especially in writing

<sup>1</sup> Dosen FKIP Universitas Batanghari

expository text. Practically, for the lecturer, it will be beneficial for improvement of teaching quality by revising his strategies. Besides, it will develop lecturer's sense of sensitivity toward the problems found in teaching and learning, particularly in teaching writing expository text. For the students, it will be very helpful to improve their ability in writing expository text. For the readers, it is as one of the useful sources for conducting further research. In turn, it will also be beneficial for the institution where this research is conducted. Operationally, this research is going to answer the research question.

## **REVIEW OF THE RELATED THEORY**

### **1) Writing Skill**

Writing is the most difficult subject in the school, especially for university students who will write their final task then the students have to produce a text by using English. They have to write about what they think in their mind and state it on a paper by using the correct procedure.

Writing facilitates people to make contact with others. Through writing, people can communicate their feelings, thoughts, and ideas to others to make them understand. In line with this, Olshtain in Celce-Murcia (2001) states that "Through writing, a variety of messages can be communicated to close or distant, or known or unknown readers." Hence, writers have to pay attention to linguistic accuracy such as spelling, punctuation, and structure, clarity of presentation, and organization of their ideas. Those provide readers with the clues for interpretation.

There are contrastive views of writing from some experts. First, Oshima and Hogue (2003) state that "Writing is a process because it can be reviewed and revised." He claims that a piece of writing is never complete. Then, Nunan (2003) and Harmer (2004) mention that "Writing is both a product and a process. The process involves imagination, organization, drafts, edits, reads, and rereads, and the product means what readers read, such as an essay, a letter, a story, and a research report." Based on those views, the researcher regards that writing needs process to produce an effective results.

However, teaching writing is not an easy task. There are many components that should be considered to create good writing. Frankel & Norman (1980) states that "Writing process is a highly sophisticated skill combining five general components: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. When it comes to testing, this complex process is commonly being problems that are faced both teacher and students."

From the definitions above it can be concluded that writing is a skill of expressing ideas through written language which needs a process to produce a well – organized result by being aware of its conventions. In other words, it

is the way of interaction between writers and readers in which writers are required to consider factors influencing readers' understanding about the message of their writing.

### **2) Expository Text**

Expository text is probably the type most frequently in college course. Expository text is non-fiction reading material in which the intent of this written work is to inform or explain something to the reading audience. Fitzgerald and Smith (1991:115) define "Expository essay as an essay whose purpose is to inform the readers of writer's opinion about a topic and developed by a logical sequences of related ideas." So, the students need explicit instruction in how to organize their writing, presents ideas which are logically related to the main topic, and weave sentences together in a smooth way.

Expository writing is meant to inform, explain, clarify, define or instruct via logical analysis. "There are several ways to develop a logical analysis, including comparison and contrast, cause and effect, problem and solution, definition, examples, and logical division" (Bander, 1983; Blanchart and Root, 2004; Folse et al., 2001). Whichever type it is, expository writing usually demonstrates such characteristics as focus on the main topic, logical supporting facts, strong organization, a logical order, clarity, unity and coherence, and smooth transitions.

In addition, Boardman (2002) explains that "There are many ways to develop expository text. They are: First, by comparing two things or people (example: buildings, political leaders, economic theories). Second, by showing the steps in a process (example: how to increase profits, how to evaluate a painting). Third, by analyzing something into its parts and analyzing a problem (example: different theories of learning, global warming). The last, by persuading to make others do something and arguing for your opinion (example: indonesian culture vs western culture)."

Based on the explanation above, it can be restated that expository is a type of oral or written discourse that is used to explain, describe, give information or inform on what is being discussed. The main focus is to explain the facts. One important point to keep in mind for the author is to try using words that clearly show what they are talking about rather than blatantly telling the reader what is being discussed. Since clarity requires strong organization, one of the most important mechanisms that can be used to improve our skills in exposition is to provide directions to improve the organization of the text.

### **Component of Expository Text**

According to Kemper and Sebranek (2004) state that "There are several components that should be taken into account in order to compose

a writing expository text, they are: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanic.” But, in this research the researcher intends to.

### **1) Content**

The purpose of expository text is to explain something, that is, to provide readers with information worth knowing and thinking about. Thus, the phrase “content” refers to the significance of the writer’s topic, the depth of the writer’s knowledge and analysis of the topic. It means that the writer has to develop the ideas and the main feature of strong development. So, the main idea of the topic written must be clear and accurate. The writer also should give sufficient supporting ideas to develop their essay. In a complete one, writer provides the readers with a restricted topic sentence and sufficient information to clarify, to analyzed and support the main idea stated in the topic sentence. Every sentence must qualify and explain the main idea and every sentence should contribute to developing one central idea. It means that unity should be gained.

In addition, Oshima and Hogue (1991:17) mention the elements or parts of paragraph, they are:

- a. Topic sentence : the main idea of the paragraph. It also limits the topic to one or two areas. The specific area is called the controlling idea. The topic sentence is neither too general nor too specific. A good topic sentence gives the reader a hint about the contents of the paragraph but none of the details.
- b. Supporting sentence: supporting sentences explain or prove the topic sentence. They develop topic sentence. They explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, statistics and quotation.
- c. Concluding sentences: the end of the paragraph and leave the reader with important points to remember.

### **2) Organization**

The organization of expository text consist of three main parts. First, introductory paragraph with thesis statements; second, middle (supporting) paragraphs; and the last, concluding paragraph. The whole part is also used in the whole part of organizational pattern of expository text.

Dealing with the third main part of expository text, a good expository also determined by the organizational patterns that is used by the writer in writing expository text. As Dymock and Nicholson (2010) identify that “Organizational patterns of of expository text structure consist of descriptive, sequential, cause-effect, compare-contrast and problem-solution.”

### **3) Grammar**

It is important for the students to be able to use grammar correctly because it is the basic to understand a language. According to Brown (1994:347) “Grammar is a system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence.” The basic grammar, such as using appropriate tenses and subject-verb agreement, using noun whether count and uncount, and choosing the right articles, helps students to compose a text. The tense of a verb shows the time of an action or condition. Tense also gives information whether an action happened just once, happened repeatedly, has stopped happening or is still happening Hogue (2003:76). The suitable tenses make the idea send clearly.

From the explanation above, it is clear that grammar is very essential and important, and also it cannot be separated from the language. Without grammar a language is meaningless and useless especially in writing. Generally the grammar used in this type of essay is the present tense which is used to express an opinion about current issues. The language functions used in an expository essay tend to express obligations and suggestions. Finally the preview of an argument is often found close to the thesis or as part of it.

### **4) Mechanic**

Mechanics are the conventions of print that do not exist in oral language, including spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (Steve, 2005:13). Because they do not exist in oral language, a writer has to consciously learn how mechanics function in written language. For example, while speakers do not have to pay attention of the spellings of words, writers not only have to use standard spelling for each word but may even have to use different spellings for words that sound the same but have different meanings.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was a descriptive research, because it was aimed at describing things as the way and also analyzed the interrelationship of the data. Selinger and Shohamy (1989) propose that “The descriptive design is used to specify, delineate, or describe naturally occurring phenomena without experimental manipulation.” The descriptive research involved the collecting the data in order to answer the research questions concerning the current status or phenomena. This research was done in Jambi city located in central city. It was not far from governor office. This research hold in Batanghari University (UNBARI) Jambi, exactly in SlametRiyadi Street (Broni), Jambi 36122, phone: 0741 60673, Fax: 0741 60673. Email [rektorat@unbari.ac.id](mailto:rektorat@unbari.ac.id) Website <http://www.unbari.ac.id/>. The research was started on April 25<sup>th</sup> to May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

The source of the data in this research was semester four students of Batanghari University

(UNBARI) Jambi, enrolled in the year 2013/2014. They consisted of four classes (IV A, IV B, IV C, and IV D). The numbers of the students were 120 students. All of the classes were treated similarly in learning English. They had same lecturer and same materials.

Moreover, Arikunto (2006:131) states that "If the subject or the source of the data is less than 100 it is better taken all. Instead, if the total of the source of the data is more than 100 it can be taken between 10%-15% or 20%-25%." Thus for this research, the researcher took 25% of the numbers of the students. So, 30 students were taken as the sample of this research.

The researcher used two ways as the techniques of collecting the data: 1. The researcher conducted writing test toward the students. 2. Doing interviews. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed them. There were two analyses that were used in analyzing the data. They were quantitative and qualitative analysis. In quantitative analysis, the data that were analyzed was the data in the form of numerical based on the result of the students' score in writing test. In qualitative data were used to analyze informations related to the students' writing skill and difficulties faced by the students in writing expository text. In analyzing the data, the researcher implemented the steps adapted from Gay and Airasian (2000). They were data managing, reading/ memoing, describing, classifying, and interpreting.

#### **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

The presentation of the finding is divided into 1) The students' skill in writing expository text concerning with content, organization and mechanic, 2) Students' difficulties in writing expository text concerning with content, organization, and mechanic.

The description can be seen from the data analysis in the following.

##### **1) The Students' Skill in Writing Expository Text**

The Students were given enough time to write expository text. They were allowed to choose the title and organizational pattern which they like most. Then, three scorers analyzed the score of the students' test. After that, the score of the students were grouped based on the rubric of assesment. The students' writing skill were grouped into four categories namely: very good, good, poor and very poor.

###### **a. Very Good**

Writing test which considered into very good category was the test that fulfill the average score 4 (very good score) in organization, grammar and mechanic. After scoring and analyzing the students' paragraphs, no one of students could achieve very good category.

###### **b. Good**

There were 3 students (10%) out of 30 students were categorized into good quality. They were: student 3, student 8 and student 11. Based on average score of test I, II, and test III, these students fulfilled the criteria of good score. The following was the example of the student who got good score. In the test,

this student got score 3 (good score) in organization of paragraph. In grammar, she got 4 (very good score). In mechanics, this student got 3 (good score).

The amount of the text was written by the student is 328 words. The title of sample 11 was "Pollution". It consisted of five paragraphs. Here, the student used cause-effect text to organize her ideas about pollution. She explained about the causes and the effects of pollution. First, she started with the introduction with general statement. Then, she stated body of the text with relevant information and the last she also concluded her paragraph briefly. She also used transition signal of cause-effect to connect her ideas or to give more explanation.

###### **c. Poor**

There were 13 students (43,33%) out of 30 students were categorized into poor quality. They were : student 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17, 22, 24, and student 30. Based on average score of test I, II, and test III, these students fulfilled the criteria of poor score. Here, the researcher took student 14 to be analyzed. The following was the example of student who got poor score. In organization of paragraph, she got 2 (poor score). In grammar, she got 2 (poor score). In mechanics, this student got 2 (poor score).

The amount of the text is 344 words. The title of sample 14 is "Why Reality Shows are so popular". It consist of three paragraphs. Here, the student used cause-effect text to organize her ideas about the reason why reality shows are so popular. She explained about the causes and the effects to human life. First, she started with the introduction with general statement and at the end of first paragraph, she stated thesis statement. Then, she stated body of the text with irrelevant information and the last she also concluded her paragraph but unclear. To be more clear, it can be seen the analysis of the text based on the indicators of expository text below.

###### **d. Very Poor**

There were 14 students (46,66 %) out of 30 students were categorized into poor quality. They were : student 7, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28 and student 29 was very poor. Based on average score of test I, II, and test III, these students fulfilled the criteria of very poor score. The following was the example of student who got very poor score. In the test, this student got score 2 (poor score) in organization. In grammar, she got 1 (very poor score). In

mechanics, this student got 1(very poor score).

The title of sample 12 was "Culture". It consisted of three paragraphs. It was indicated description text because she described about the culture. It was 209 words.

It was very clear that this student did not understand about how to produce good writing in order to the reader understood what were the message that would be delivered to the reader. At the first paragraph, it was hard to find main ideas because between one sentence to the next sentences were unrelated. It can be seen in the underline sentences. At the first sentence, she talked about the meaning of culture. Then in the second sentences, she talked about the culture is important. At the last sentence she came back to the general sentence. It was better for her to make the general statement at the first sentence about culture then, she should give more explanation about the general statement, and the last sentence of the first paragraph should contain with thesis statement in order to help her self to develop her ideas in the next paragraph.

In summary, the students' skill in writing expository text can be seen in the following table:

**Table 1 Students' Skill in Writing Expository Text**

INDICATORS	Frequencies		
	TEST I	TEST II	TEST III
a. Very good	-	-	-
b. Good	3	3	3
c. Poor	10	17	16
d. Very Poor	17	10	11

From the table, it can be seen that there was no student got very good score. In test I, there were 3 students got good score, 10 students got poor score and 17 students got very poor score. In test II there were 3 students got good score, 17 students got poor score and 10 students got very poor score. In test III, there are 3 students got good score, 16 students got poor score and 11 students got very poor score.

## **2) Students' difficulties in writing expository text**

Based on the result of the interview, there were some difficulties were faced by semester four of students of Batanghari University in writing expository text. There were three components being analyzed in the students' expository text. They were content, organization, and mechanics. The roles of each component are interrelated and contributed to the result of the test. From the result of the test, no one of the components was mastered well.

The first difficulties were related to the content of the text. There were many unfamiliar vocabularies that made the students difficult to comprehend the text. Most of students couldn't express the ideas clearly and accurately. There were only a few number of students could express their ideas clearly. There were insufficient ideas discussed in the paragraph to inform the reader about the topic of the paragraph. Moreover, they mostly wrote unclear topic sentence and did not include further information or explanation to convince the reader about the topic. On the order word, the paragraph was not informative. Most of students missed elements of paragraph such as: topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Meanwhile, a paragraph is complete when it has all its elements and leaves no confusion in the readers' mind (Oshima and Hogue, 1991:17).

The second difficulties were organization of the text. It was related to how the students develops his/her idea in chronological sequences of generic structure. First, introductory paragraph that contained with main idea and thesis statement. Second, body of the paragraph that contained with the series of events, difficulties happened in the factual data. Third, the concluding paragraph that contained with the argument of someone to conclude her or his ideas of paragraph. Not only that, in organization the writer also have to consider about transition signals used in order to connect her or his ideas to the next sentence or paragraph.

The third difficulties were grammar. Most of the students had difficulties in grammar, proved in their writing and the result of interview. It indicated that students did not understand the English grammar that they used when they wrote expository text. In addition, there are many incorrect sentence structures found in the students' paragraph. They often expressed their idea with unclear and confusing sentences.

The last difficulties was many of students made errors in mechanics aspect. Basically, the students used mechanics to enhance and clarify the meaning of what they wrote. Mechanics allowed writers to specify the exact way a word or phrase should be interpreted by the reader; they helped the reader understand exactly what the writer had in mind. When the writer could not be there to read her/his writing to someone else, mechanics could help do the reading for the reader. In addition, mechanics guided the reader by telling the reader when to stop, when to go, when to speed up, when to slow down, and so on. However, many of students were seemed confused about the use of mechanics in writing. There are many mechanics' errors found in the students' text. Although from the result of interview they said that they did not have difficulties in mechanics. But the fact, some of

them have difficulties in spelling.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that in writing expository texts, semester four of students of Batanghari University (UNBARI) Jambi had poor skills. It could be seen from the analysis of all indicators of those four components in which the indicators of content, organization, grammar, and mechanic.

Firstly, the researcher finds that there are some difficulties faced by semester four of Batanghari University (UNBARI) students' in writing expository text. Theoretically they know about how to write a text well, but they fail to apply it into good paragraph. It is caused by some difficulties such as; the students have lack of background knowledge of the topic. The students have difficulties in text type and text organization. They can mention the text type but fail to determine text organization of expository text. They are confuse about the transition signals used in each kinds of expository text. Most of the students write the text in limited transition signals.

Secondly, the students have difficulties in identifying the main idea of the text that makes them miss some important information in the text. They also sometimes forget to show thesis statement of paragraph. The last, the students have difficulties in grammar and mechanic based on the result of the test. They have difficulties in spelling the words.

## SUGGESTION

Based on the result of the research, the researcher gives some suggestion for those who are concerned with the area of study English lecturers and students in order to be able to improve their writing skill.

1. The concept of expository text with its kinds and elements should be learnt and taught deeply.
2. Based on the result of this research findings and discussions, it indicates that most of students' skill in writing expository text was poor. The major difficulties of the students are content, organization, grammar, and mechanic of the expository text. It means that, the students don't understand how to organize their ideas into good expository text. These difficulties are expected to be as a description to the both students and lecturers to minimize and anticipate these failure by explaining it more, motivating them to practice and do exercise consistently and continuously.
3. The lecturer must consider appropriate strategy and method in teaching expository text, applying some strategies to improve students' skill in developing expository text, for example: the lecturer may demonstrates media in teaching learning process, by using

two different pictures for example, then the student can identify the differences and similarities of those picture. In addition, the lecturer may try to use some techniques in order to stimulate the student mind such as: brainstorming, looping, making outline, etc before start to write.

4. All of writing components can't not be separated each other. Both of the lecturer and students have to consider about the writing component such as content, organization, grammar, and mechanics. So the lecturers and the students should always practice to write continually and simultaneously.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arikunto, Suharsimi. 2006. *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktek Edisi ke VI*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta
- Bander, R. G. (1983). *American English Rhetoric: A Writing Program in English as a Second language (3rd ed.)*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston: New York.
- Boardman, Cynthia. A. 2002. *Writing to Communicate (Paragraph and Essay)*. New York: Longman.
- Brown, H. Douglas. 1994. *Teaching by Principles; An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. White Plains: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Dymock, S.J., & Nicholson, T. 2010. *Reading Comprehension: What is It? How do You Teach It?* Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- Fitzgerald, Kathryn R and J.M. Smith. 1991. *The Student Writer*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher Co.
- Frankel, Jack r and Wallen, Norman. 1980. *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Hogue, Ann. 2003. *The Essentials of English*. New York. Pearson Education
- Murcia, M. Celce. 2001. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. Boston. Heinle
- Nunan, David. 2003. *Practical English Language Teaching*. Singapore: McGraw Hill and Practice. McGraw Hill.
- Oshima, Alice and Ann Hogue. 1991. *Writing Academic English (3<sup>rd</sup> ed)*. Longman: Addison Wesley Longman
- Selinger, Herbert W. and Elena Shohami. 1989. *Second Language Research Method*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Steve. 2005. *Convention*. Retrieved from <http://www.learn.org/lp/people/59>. On January, 12th 2012